

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 6818

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IR
SUBJ: IRANIANS FOCUS ON NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

1. AS IRANIAN POLITICAL SCENE SETTLES DOWN FOR THE SUMMER IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO REVIEW BRIEFLY MAIN DIRECTION IN WHICH INTERNAL POLITICAL PROCESS SEEMS TO BE HEADING. OVER PAST FEW WEEKS THE PROCESS HAS BEGUN TO CONCENTRATE ON PREPARATIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE SUMMER 1979.

2. DEBATE OVER REVISED GOVERNMENT ELECTION BILL WAS INCONCLUSIVE IN THE MAJLES PRIOR TO ITS RECESSON END OF JUNE, AND THERE IS GOOD CHANCE VARIETY OF OBJECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR AMENDMENT OF BILL WILL RESULT IN NO BILL BEING PASSED AND ELECTION TAKEING PALCE UNDER PREVIOUS, PRESENT LAW. THIS IS IN ITSELF, LESS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, THAN NON-LEGAL ASPECTS OF SITUATION. MOST IMPORTANT IS DEGREE OF
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PERMISSIVENESS ON SHAH'S PART AS TO INDIVIDUALS AND PARTIES WHO WILL BE ALLOWED TO COMPETE FOR ELECTION. TIED TO THIS IS ELECTION PROCESS ITSELF, PARLARLY QUESTION WHETHER OR NOT RASTIKHIZ PARTY WILL BE EMPOWERED TO PASS ON QUALIFICATIONS OF ALL CANDIDATES, THUS IN EFFECT CONTROLLING WHO CAN RUN. ALL SIGNS INDICATE INDEPENDENTS WILL BE ALLOWED --AND THERE IS GOO CHANCE THIS MIGHT DEVELOP INTO "GROUPS"

OR POLITICAL PARTIES AS WELL.

3. CLOSING DAYS OF PARLIAMENT BROUGHT INTERESTING NEW DEVELOPMENTS. ONE WAS ANNOUNCEMENT BY DEPTUY PEZESHKPOUR THAT HE WAS REVIVING HIS RIGHT WINGPAN-IRANIST PARTY AND THUS CHALLENGING THE UNWRITTEN RULE (THERE IS NOW LAW AS SUCH) THAT RASTIKHIZ IS THE ONLY PERMISSIBLE POLITICAL PARTY. HE SOFTENED THIS CHALLENGE BY PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE OF ALL HIS PEOPLE (SOME ONE-HALF DOZEN DEPUTIES) TO THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE RASTAKHIZ; MONARCHY, CONSTITUTION, AND SHAH-PEOPLE REVOLUTION. HE DESCRIBED RASTAKHIZ AS A MOVEMENT TO WHICH ALL MIGHT SUBSCRIBE WHATEVER THEIR POLITICAL PARTY. ANOTHER DEPTUY, BANI-AHMAD OF TABRIZ, ANNOUNCED FORMATION OF HIS OWN GROUP (SAID TO BE OF MORE LEFTEIST, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEANINGS) BUT HAS SO FAR REFRAINED FROM ANNOUNCING WITHDRAWAL FROM RASTIKHIZ. OUR ASSUMPTION IS HE IS WAITING TO SEE IF PEZESHKPOUR GETS AWAY WITH IT. BANI-AHMAD IS BEING ASSISTED BY SOME OF THE NATIONAL FRONT OPPOSITIONISTS, THOUGH THIS ASSISTANCE IS STILL TENTATIVE AND SECRET.

4. AT THE SAME TIME RASTAKHIZ ITSELF HAS BEEN UNDERGOING CHANGES. AS SERIES OF MANEUVERS REMOVED PROGRESSIVE WING HEAD MAJIDI, WHO HAD BECOME A SYMBOL OF THE PAST SOMEWHAT COMPARABLE TO SAVAK GENERAL NASSIRI, WHO SHAH ALSO RECENTLY REMOVED. AFTER A BRIEF RESIGNATION, NIOC HEAD HOUSANG ANSARY
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WAS REINSTATED AS HEAD OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE WING COORDINATING COMMITTEE, THOUGH SHARING HIS COORDINATING FUNCTION WITH NEWLY ELECTED WING COORDINATOR MOINI, WHO IS CONCURRENTLY MINISTER OF LABOR. THE "GROUP FOR THE STUDY OF IRANIAN PROBLEMS" SUDDENLY GAINED PROMINENCE THIS SPRING AND, HEADED BY HUSHANG NAHAVANDI, FORMERLY CHANCELLOR OF TEHRAN UNIVERSITY AND PRESENTLY HEAD OF THE QUEEN'S BUREAU, HAS BEEN ACCEPTED AS A THIRD WING OF THE RASTIKHIZ. AS OF THIS WRITING MANY OF THE GROUP DISPUTE MEMBERSHIP IN RASTIKHIZ, AND PREFER TO ISSUE THEIR FINDINGS IN THE NAME OF THE "GROUP" ONLY. THIS HAS FURTHER CONFUSED THE INTERNAL SITUATION, A CONFUSION WHICH HAS BECOME CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY AS THE SHAH CONTINUES TO LIBERALIZE WITHOUT YIELDING ANY SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL POWER.

5. THE EMBASSY HAS LEARNED VERY CONFIDENTIALLY THAT LEADERS OF THE RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE SHAH WILL PERMIT RELATIVELY "FREE" ELECTIONS AND THEY ARE WELCOME TO PUT UP THEIR OWN CANDIDATES. THE EXREMIST RELIGIOUS WING HEADED BY KHOMEINI IN IRQA HAS ALREADY BEGUN PUTTING TOGETHER SOME NAMES. AYATOLLAH SHARIATMADARI AND PERHAPS OTHER AYATOLLAHS CAN BE EXPECTED

TO DRAW UP SIMILAR LISTS IN THE WEEKS AND MONTHS AHEAD.
AS THINGS LOOK NOW, THESE CANDIDATES WOULD PRESUMABLY COMPETE WITH DANDIDATES PUT UP BY THE VARIOUS WINGS OF RASTIKHIZ AS WELL AS OTHER PARTIES AND GROUPS SUCH AS THE PAN-IRANISTS THE BANI-AHMAD GROUP AND ANY OTHERS THAT MAY BE FORMED IN THE YEAR AHEAD (BY NATIONAL FRONT AND OTHER OPPOSITIONISTS).

6. ALL IN ALL, THE POLITICAL AIR IN IRAN THESE DAYS IS CONSIDERABLY MORE INVIGORATING FOR LOYALISTS AND OPPOSITIONISTS ALIKE. THE SHAH'S READINESS TO COUNTENANCE OPEN POLITICAL ORGANIZATION BY OPPOSITIONISTS-IF IT CONTINUES AS IT SEEMS IT WILL-HAS LARGELY DISARMED THE OPPOSITION OF ITS ONE MAJOR ISSUE WHICH COULD HAVE UNIFIED IT IN AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIM. BY MOVING TO ASSURE FAIRLY
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FREE PARTICIPATION IN NEXT SUMMER'S ELECTIONS THE SHAH IS GIVING THE FIRST TRULY POLITICAL INTERPRETATION TO HIS LIBERALIZATION DRIVE AND IS MOVING AHEAD OF OPPOSITIONIST PRESSURES RATHER THAN REACTING TO THEM. THIS ACTIVITY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY GROW MORE VIGOROUS IN THE FALL.
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